Esprit
Making It Work for You

BRIGADIER GENERAL JAMES E. SHELTON, U.S. Army Retired

As long as military units are made up of people, people will be their most important ingredient. What a unit commander must do is capture the imaginations of those people, harness their energies, and focus their actions on the unit's mission. It is that focus—combining desired actions—that will provide the teamwork necessary to the unit's success.

Many techniques can be used to capture the imaginations of the soldiers in a unit, such as stories from the unit history, battle streamers, or examples of heroism and self-sacrifice. The commander must believe in his examples and make his presentations convincing and sincere. This effort must be continuously reinforced—at the initial unit orientation, payday talks, training critiques, and every opportunity commanders have to talk to their men in groups.

Soldiers like to be reminded of their organization, because it is through the organization that they receive most of their personal recognition. They want to "have a home" and be proud of their unit; and they enjoy it most when their leaders talk to them face to face about their organization.

In commanding two rifle compaies, an infantry battalion, and an infantry brigade, I found that unit slogans helped capture the soldiers' imaginations and focus their behavior.

The first unit was Company D, 1st Battle Group, 7th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division, in the late 1950s after the Korean War. At that time in Korea, the rifle company had about 80 U.S. soldiers and 120 Koreans (under the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army, or KATUSA).

Since most of the Americans in the unit, including the leaders, felt sorry for themselves for being there, we had serious morale problems. Consequently, very little was done well. In particular, the physical conditioning of the soldiers was poor, and no one seemed to care.

CHALLENGING

Additionally, the most challenging tactical problem a commander faced in Korea was climbing the hills. The only way to be in good physical condition was to practice climbing them. Normal physical training would not do it.

So I tried to capture the imagination of the troops by adopting the slogan "None Too Big" for our company. And every day for PT, we climbed a mountain we called "Charlie Block." The first day, it took us two hours, but within four months we were doing it in 40 minutes.

During the annual Army Training Tests (ATTS, which are now called ARTEPs), our company finished the attack phase—seizing a series of hills—an hour ahead of any other company in the division. The other leaders and I hated to climb those hills, too, but after we were able to capture the imaginations of our men, we had to run to catch up with them.

The second slogan I used was while commanding Company D, 2d Battle Group, 501st Airborne Infantry, 82d Airborne Division in the early 1960s. At that time the Army was rebuilding itself from the throes of the strategy of "massive retaliation," the days when most of the defense budget had gone to bombers and missiles.

The early 1960s were an exciting time, and the 82d Airborne Division had filled itself with a large number of gung ho young paratroopers. We also had an excellent crop of career NCOs. It was a time when most of the senior NCOs lived in the barracks, few if any soldiers were married, and few soldiers had cars. Our biggest problem was that some of the men would go on pass and stay away—many times for 29 days, or just before they would have been dropped from the rolls as deserters.

These men were good soldiers when they were soldiering, but I needed to capture their imaginations. The company adopted the slogan "We'll Be There." This meant we (all of us) would always be where we were supposed to be, and on time. At reveille, at work formations, seizing an objective, carrying out a work detail—"We'll Be There." One of our platoon sergeants wrote a "jody" cadence to it and we sang "We'll be there" on our daily runs. The platoons posted the slogan on their wall lockers.

As a result, Company D was the first rifle company in the division at that time to go 30 days with no AWOLs and no delinquency reports. It wasn't the commander or the leaders who did it. We simply captured the imaginations of the men in the unit and focused their behavior. They didn't do everything per-

fectly, but they did kick the AWOL habit.

In the early 1970s, I commanded the 1st Battalion, 505th Infantry, 82d Airborne Division for two years. It was a hard time for the Army. The Vietnam War had just ended, and enthusiasm was at a low ebb. The Army was practically out of control, including the division. It was the time of "do your own thing," drugs, nighttime terror, and racial problems. The men did not look or act like soldiers, and many of our professional NCOs had been ground out in the Vietnam mill.

The slogan we chose was "Get It Together." We were the 505th Panthers and we had a unit history that wouldn't quit; our most serious problem was a lack of trust and faith in each other. The lack of discipline manifested itself in drug use and racial problems. The slogan "Get It Together" had a definite appeal, because no man—white, black, Hispanic, or any other—wanted to be in a unit where the soldiers had no trust or respect for each other.

We were not perfect, but the slogan had meaning to the key leaders and men of the unit, and it helped us at a time when we desperately needed help.

In the late 1970s, I found myself commanding a mechanized infantry brigade—two mechanized battalions and one tank battalion—in the newly activated 24th Infantry Division at Fort Stewart. My predecessor in the 2d Brigade had built and trained a solid mechanized infantry brigade. Now I wanted to capture the imaginations of its soldiers.

When the division received its high priority mission for rapid deployment as part of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), we decided to call our brigade the "Vanguard" Brigade—out in front of the rest. And since the 24th Infantry Division was the "Victory" Division, our slogan was "Vanguard to Victory."

I believe the 3,000 men who were in the "Vanguard" Brigade remember it because we were able to capture their imaginations, harness their energies, and focus their behavior on the unit's mission.

The leaders of each brigade, battalion, and company should always be trying to capture the imaginations of their men. They should not overlook meaningful and sincere slogans that can help focus the unit on its predominant problem or effort at a given time.

The power of people—combined and focused desirable behavior—can make any unit a winner. And in the infantry, what it takes is weapon system proficiency, physical conditioning, and focused leaders and soldiers.

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The Soviet Army
Coming to Terms with Its Afghan Experience

CAPTAIN PAUL H. VIVIAN

Defeat for an army, whether political or military or both, is traumatic. In the aftermath of the United States' exodus from Vietnam, the U.S. Army went through a period of intense soul searching. Were we militarily defeated or simply abandoned by pusillanimous politicians and a fickle public? Did we fight honorably? Did we fight well? Not surprisingly, the Soviet Army in the aftermath of its own "exodus" from Afghanistan is wrestling with the same basic questions.

A part of this process of reappraisal is the recent decision of *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* (*Military History Journal*) to establish, as a new, regular feature of the magazine, a section entitled "Afghanistan: Summary and Conclusions." Fittingly, they asked Lieutenant General Boris Vsevolodich Gromov, the last commander of the Limited Contingent in Afghanistan and the current commander of the Kievan Military District, to inaugurate the new feature section.

General Gromov contributed an article entitled simply "They Defended, They Learned, They Built." The essay does not contain any profound military insights; it is, rather, an emotional retrospective. The article has a lively style, reminiscent of a letter dictated to a secretary rather than a manuscript that has been labored over. Gromov's goals are to justify the sacrifices of his soldiers and to defend them against those who would besmirch their honor. In the process, Gromov reveals much about himself.

General Gromov's article offers a highly personal, rather than an "objective, historical," perspective on Afghanistan. The portrait that Gromov paints of himself is that of a professional soldier—a combat soldier—who is intensely loyal to his Motherland.

He establishes his credentials by point-